

Antenatal care access and concerns of pregnant women during pandemic: a population-based study

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Background:

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to burden the health of vulnerable populations such as pregnant women. It has been estimated that antenatal care coverage has been decreased with workforce, supplies, demand, and access reductions during the outbreak in some countries. The study aimed to investigate the health care access and concerns of pregnant women during the pandemic.

Methods:

This cross-sectional study was conducted among 331 pregnant women in one district of Istanbul (Üsküdar) and a random sampling method was applied. The data was collected between November 22nd and December 18th 2020 by telephone interview after verbal consents were taken from the participants. Chi-square and multiple logistic regression analyses were performed. The study was approved by the Bahcesehir University Institutional Ethics Board.

Results:

The median age of the participants was 30 years, the median gestational age was 24 weeks. Among the participants 9.6% were previously diagnosed with COVID-19, 15.8% had a chronic disease, 48.2% were nulliparous and 18.6% had a high-risk pregnancy. The frequency of having concern for their own health was 70.7%, for their children's health was 73.0%, for going to visits in healthcare facilities was 81.0% and for giving birth during the pandemic was 83.0%. Also, 17.1% did not go to antenatal visits because of the COVID-19 concerns. According to the logistic regression analysis, women who had chronic disease had higher concerns about their own health; women who had chosen to go to hospitals for antenatal care visits had higher concerns about children's health and giving birth, and women who had concerns about going to health facilities during the COVID-19 pandemic were less likely to go to family health centers.

Conclusions:

Our results suggest that the concerns related to the pandemic among pregnant women are at significant levels. Measures should be taken to ensure that antenatal care services are not interrupted throughout the current pandemic.

Key messages:

- Significant concern levels were detected among pregnant women in our sample.
- Measures should be taken to ensure to maintain uninterrupted antenatal care services.